Chapter 1

Introduction to South Sulawesi

This book explores the relationship between local, regional, and global forms of symbolic knowledge and power in Ara, Indonesia. It is devoted to the process by which local communities were incorporated into regional political and economic systems over a period of about a thousand years, from 600 to 1600 C.E. I will argue that this process was facilitated in the whole area surrounding the Java Sea by the existence of a common Austronesian symbolic system. Although there is little discussion of Islam and European colonialism here, it is important to state at the outset that the kinds of symbolic knowledge I discuss here have coexisted with these global forms of knowledge for the past five hundred years.

Outline of the Present Volume

Two theoretical chapters frame the ethnographic portion of this work. In chapter 2, I outline my general theoretical approach to the anthropology of knowledge and power and situate the present volume within my larger project. In this volume, I am concerned with the relation between symbolic knowledge and what Weber called “traditional authority” in Makassar society. I argue for the importance of making a distinction between practical, symbolic, and ideological forms of knowledge. Ideological knowledge is dependent on symbolic knowledge, and symbolic knowledge is dependent on practical knowledge. None of them can be fully reduced to or explained in terms of the others.

The next seven chapters follow the introduction and transformation of symbolic and ideological practices through time and space. In chapter 3, I discuss the spread of the Austronesian people through Island Southeast Asia and the development of some of the basic features of Austronesian life, such as long-distance sailing, trading forest produce, and cultivating rice. Social intercourse intensified around the Java Sea when the Sumatran Empire of Srivijaya came to serve as an entrepôt between China and India in the seventh century. I analyze a group of myths that spread throughout the region during this period. In these myths, an initial antagonism between primordial male and female entities mod-
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erates into an acceptance of complementary opposition, upon which the two can come together in an orderly fashion and produce a pair of opposite-sex twins plus a third, androgynous entity. This scheme provides the key to much of the symbolic material discussed in subsequent chapters.

In chapter 4, I discuss the way little royal centers, modeling themselves on the Javanese kingdom of Kediri, sprang up along the coastlines of Sumatra, Borneo, and Sulawesi in the thirteenth century. These centers were loosely connected with one another and with the great civilizations of India and China by maritime trade. Traces of this period persist in myths recounting the adventures of a culture hero, often known as Panji. A version of this story is embedded in the enormous mythological cycle of the Bugis people known as the La Galigo. In the Bugis version, a pair of opposite-sex twins is separated at birth. The female twin remains fixed at her center of origin and becomes a bissu priestess with the power to move vertically between the Middleworld, the Upperworld, and the Underworld. The male twin is a great sailor, with the power to move horizontally across the sea. He uses a boat created by his sister to penetrate a new royal center where he marries a first cousin. In this maritime world, local royal houses reproduce themselves by sending noblemen across the sea to marry noblewomen from distant royal houses. Each local dynasty maintains its own links to the Upperworld and Underworld through local royal women.

In chapter 5, I analyze a set of myths in which the ordered exchange of sexual substances collapses through incest and adultery. The protagonists of these myths are worldly rulers unable to regulate their animal drives of lust and greed who are driven into exile or who are executed by their subjects. These sins interrupt the normal flow of life, resulting in epidemics that kill humans and animals, droughts that kill crops, and shipwrecks that send trade goods to the bottom of the sea. Androgynous shamans work to avert these calamities by performing exorcism rituals at the water’s edge.

In chapter 6, I discuss the origin of wet rice agriculture in central South Sulawesi in the thirteenth century. A new ideology arose that legitimated royal powers in terms of an intrinsic difference between those with heavenly ancestors and the great mass of common farmers. In the foundation myths of inland Bugis kingdoms, kingship is based on a social contract in which rulers who descend from heaven provide their terrestrial subjects with social harmony and fertility in return for food, clothing, and shelter. In the foundation myths of coastal polities such as Luwu’ and Bantaeng, royal houses traced their origin back to a wandering prince from the empire of Majapahit who encounters a heavenly maiden who has descended from heaven in a bamboo tube. They marry and produce monstrous offspring who become the first rulers. The female ancestor returns to heaven, only to descend to found different kingdoms elsewhere. The agricultural fertility of the land is associated in these myths with females of divine origin. It is contrasted with the long-distance trade that occurs on the sea and the temporal power of males from foreign empires. Like the myths discussed in chapter 4, these coastal foundation myths also serve as a template for a certain kind of royal
wedding. In this case, it is a wedding in which a local kingdom allies with a more powerful foreign empire without losing its autonomy.

In chapter 7, I show how the symbolic system elaborated to legitimate kingship during the fifteenth century was linked to a new set of practical techniques in the sixteenth century to lay the basis for the centralized empire of Gowa and Tallo’. The legitimacy of local rulers was increasingly derived not from their own founding royal ancestors, but from their relationship to the royal houses of Gowa and Tallo’. This was the case in Ara and Bira, whose royal chronicles record their incorporation into the empire in the 1560s. The previously female symbolic function of agricultural fertility is now linked to bloodshed and warfare and absorbed by the agrarian kings of inland states. The complementary opposite of the ruler of the land now becomes the sea king of a coastal state, who continues to be associated with long-distance trade and diplomacy.

In chapter 8, I discuss the changing political functions of royal rituals during the colonial period. According to the traditional symbolic system, rulers were installed on the same stone on which the founding royal ancestor first descended from the Upperworld. Contact with the founding ancestors was maintained through sacred objects they left behind when they returned to the Otherworld. As the Dutch East India Company (VOC) established itself as a territorial power in South Sulawesi during the eighteenth century, control of these rituals and sacred objects became a matter of great practical concern to the Dutch as well as to local royal houses. The seizure of the royal regalia of Gowa by a rebellious slave in 1776 led to forty years of war in the area. After the VOC was abolished and replaced by the government of the Netherlands East Indies, the Dutch deliberately undermined the old royal rituals as they tried to remodel the local political system along the lines of a rational bureaucracy. In the face of rising nationalist sentiment in the 1920s, however, the colonial government tried to revive the old royal rituals, hoping to tap the residual traditional authority of the hereditary nobility for the colonial state.

In chapter 9, I describe the royal ancestor cults as they exist today in both Ara and Tanaberu. Although the political aspect of the ranking system was decapitated at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Dutch attempted to revive the ritual aspect in the 1930s, in an effort to forestall Islamic nationalism. This effort received support from a segment of the traditional nobility, because kingship anchored the social hierarchy. The royal ancestor cult in Ara is centered on a female spirit medium, a woman who is possessed only by male spirits and who is “married” to another woman. The cult is especially important to other noblemen, who are excluded from most Islamic and bureaucratic offices. The cult in Tanaberu focuses on a pair of golden birds sent by the founding ancestor and his wife 150 years ago. Throughout the twentieth century, the central government has appointed men from other areas to rule this village, but they all found local wives descended from these founding ancestors. Here the cult remains important to both male and female nobles. These cults are paralleled by a cult of local Islamic saints, who always exist in male-female pairs as well.
Chapters 3 through 6 thus show how myth and ritual link practical forms of knowledge such as boatbuilding, navigation, agriculture, and warfare to basic social categories such as gender and hereditary rank and to basic cosmological categories such as the Upper-, Middle-, and Underworlds and the celestial and meteorological phenomena that tie them together. Chapters 7, 8, and 9 provide some historical and contemporary examples of how concrete agents put the symbolic infrastructure outlined in the earlier chapters to political and ideological use.

In the concluding chapter, I situate the material discussed in this volume in relation to Islam and life cycle rituals. I also return to the theoretical issues raised in chapter 2 concerning the relationship between practical, symbolic, and ideological knowledge, on the one hand, and between local, regional, and global forms of knowledge, on the other.

Methodology

The process by which I arrived at the view of knowledge outlined in chapter 2 was informed by the methods I used to gather empirical data for the present analysis, and the methods I used to gather the data were in turn informed by my growing understanding of the data. In other words, data and analysis were in a dialectical relationship. I take this relationship to be more central to the anthropological method than any one methodology such as participant observation. Indeed, in the course of this project I have grown to be somewhat suspicious of an overreliance on participant observation.

Participant Observation

My decision to study the Makassar was influenced by previous field research I had conducted among the Buid of the Philippines (Gibson 1985, 1986) and by a comparative study I had made on attitudes toward violence, domination, and aggression among Southeast Asian shifting cultivators (Gibson 1990a, 1990b). I came to the conclusion that the development of negative attitudes toward violence and aggression in societies like the Buid was strongly correlated with a history of victimization by predatory coastal states, whereas the development of positive attitudes in societies like the Iban of Sarawak was correlated with a history of successful predation. To fully understand the tribal societies of highland Southeast Asia, one thus had to study their interaction with predatory coastal societies. The Bugis and Makassar of South Sulawesi have long had a reputation as among the most aggressive maritime peoples of the region.

In many ways, Ara is an ideal site for research on the relation between the practical knowledge embedded in skilled labor and the symbolic knowledge embedded in ritual. On the one hand, three-quarters of the men are skilled carpenters who build large sailboats for a living and most women are skilled in weaving, embroidering, and marketing textiles. Many of these craft skills have been jealously guarded for centuries. On the other hand, even though almost
all boatbuilding is now done in settlements scattered across the whole of Indonesia, workers return with their accumulated wages to celebrate the most important ritual events in their lives. It is thus possible for a fieldworker to observe an almost unending round of rituals relating to birth, marriage, and death. Because my primary interest was in symbolic and not practical knowledge, I spent most of my time attending rituals and interviewing acknowledged experts in various forms of esoteric knowledge. Interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia. Oral traditions and local texts were transcribed into the
Roman alphabet and translated from Makassar into Bahasa Indonesia by local scholars.

**Regional, Textual, and Historical Analysis**

In addition to the material I collected firsthand in the field, I have also used material drawn from the close reading of locally produced texts, from anthropologists and historians working on neighboring societies in the region, from Dutch missionaries and colonial officials, and from secondary sources on Islam and Asian history. This book is thus a hybrid of ethnography, geography, literary criticism, and history. This seems to me the only way to approach a highly literate society that made its living from trade with East Africa, Western Europe, the Middle East, South Asia, and East Asia for many centuries. The Makassar people were drawn into an expanding global culture in the twelfth century and have never withdrawn from it.

In my analysis of the mythology of Ara, I have drawn extensively on the writings of previous generations of Dutch, British, French, and American anthropologists and linguists working in Island Southeast Asia and beyond. As Claude Lévi-Strauss has shown, the meaning of a local myth or ritual is often revealed only when it is seen as a variant of a larger pattern. Only regional analysis can reveal whether a connection between two cultural practices is due to a common historical origin or to diffusion along chains of trade and communication (Gibson 1994a).

As soon as it became clear that Ara contained many highly literate individuals, I began to collaborate with them in compiling an archive of textual materials. Three scripts were in use in Ara: a local syllabic script known as *lontara*, Arabic, and Roman. A number of people could read and write all three scripts and I employed them to record, transcribe, and transliterate texts into Roman script and to translate them into Bahasa Indonesia. After leaving the field, I spent several years translating these Bahasa Indonesia texts into English and analyzing them. I draw on many of these textual materials in the present volume and will return to them again in future publications.

Internal analysis of the texts I gathered in the field was supplemented by historical research on the contexts in which they were originally created and the way they were introduced into local communities. I found the writings of Dutch missionaries and colonial administrators from the seventeenth century on to be especially helpful in this regard. Colonial administrators had a practical interest in power and legitimacy and paid close attention to political rivalries and rituals of legitimation. Missionaries paid attention to details of popular religious practices when they thought they could exploit them for the purposes of conversion.

**Introduction to South Sulawesi and the Bira Peninsula**

In this section I provide a general introduction to the province of South Sulawesi and a more detailed description of the hilly eastern part of the regency of Bulu-
kumba inhabited by the speakers of a chain of Makassar dialects known as “coastal Konjo.” A discussion of the symbolic meanings attached to various features of Ara’s landscape will make it clear how deeply they remain rooted in this place, despite its apparent bleakness. A tour through the barren and rocky landscape of the Bira peninsula at the south end of the Konjo area will make it equally clear why its men have had to look toward the sea for their livelihood.

The villages of the Bira peninsula exhibit the apparently paradoxical features of a high degree of social and cultural autonomy, on the one hand, and of having been tightly integrated into a regional political economy for many centuries, on the other. Coastal villages throughout the Java Sea have engaged in an extensive exchange of trade goods, people, and ideas. The people of the Bira peninsula were more tightly integrated into this system than most because the poor quality of the soil forced them to specialize in boatbuilding and long-distance trade.

In 1990, the population of the province of South Sulawesi numbered about 7 million (Pelras 1996: 7). The last official census that enumerated the population by ethnolinguistic group was the colonial census of 1930, which found that roughly half the province was Bugis. Current estimates of the numbers of each ethnic group are usually extrapolated from the relative sizes of each group in 1930. Thus, the four largest ethnic groups in the province today are said to be: Bugis (3.5 million), Makassar (2 million), Toraja (600,000), and Mandar (400,000). The Mandar and Toraja occupy the mountainous areas in the north, the Bugis the fertile lowlands in the center, and the Makassar the hilly land at the southern end of the peninsula.

The 1930 census also found that 10 percent of all ethnic Bugis in the Netherlands East Indies were living outside their homeland, whereas only 2 percent of Makassar were doing so (Lineton 1975: 38). The Mandar and the Makassar tend to be assimilated to the Bugis when encountered outside their homeland in Sumatra, Java, Malaysia, or elsewhere in the archipelago, perhaps accounting for the disproportionate number of “Bugis” enumerated outside their homeland. Because of a scarcity of arable land, the Mandar and Makassar peoples have always relied on the sea for their livelihood at least as much as the Bugis.

The Coastal Konjo

Konjo refers to a string of Makassar dialects spoken in villages lying on the boundary between Makassar and Bugis areas. Konjo is the term for “over there” in this dialect and is used as a diacritic feature to distinguish it from other Makassar dialects that use the term anjo. Most Konjo live in mountainous terrain that is not well suited to wet rice cultivation, although some very impressive terraces have been built by the mountain Konjo in and around Malino in upper Gowa. Konjo Makassar shares about 75 percent of its basic vocabulary with standard Makassar. The Konjo dialects themselves are divided into two subgroups: “mountain Konjo,” with about 100,000 speakers, spoken on and around Mount
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Bawakaraeng, and “coastal Konjo,” also with about 100,000 speakers, spoken along the coast of the Gulf of Bone. Coastal and Mountain Konjo are related to one another at the lexicostatistical level of 75 percent, making them no closer to one another at this level than each is to standard Makassar. At the morphophonemic, morphological, and syntactic levels, however, they are almost identical. The Mountain Konjo have been the subject of a number of publications by Rössler (1987, 1990, 2000) and Röttger-Rössler (1989, 2000).

In this book, I shall be concerned primarily with the coastal Konjo, who occupy the eastern kecamatan of the Kabupaten of Bulukumba. The kecamatan is the next smallest unit of administration beneath the kabupaten, or regency. Both terms are of Javanese origin. They replaced Dutch terms for division, regency, and district in the 1960s as a uniform administrative system was imposed throughout Indonesia. Some of these units correspond to ancient kingdoms, others represent an amalgamation or subdivision of such units. Of most significance for this book are the kecamatan of Kajang, Hero–Lange Lange (Hering), Bonto Tiro, and Bonto Bahari.

The capital city of Bulukumba and its environs has had a large Bugis-speaking population since the late seventeenth century, when the area came under the control of the Dutch East India Company, which turned it over to the Kingdom of Bone. Konjo-speakers have a certain sense of ethnolinguistic identity, especially in the context of the local politics of the Regency, where they often form a faction opposed to the Bugis-speakers. In this context they refer to themselves in Bahasa Indonesia as orang di atas, “people up above.” (This phrase also carries the connotation in Indonesian of “upper class.”)

Historically, the northernmost coastal Konjo kingdom was Kajang. At the heart of Kajang is a village called Tana Toa, the “Ancient Land,” famous throughout Makassar territory as a place of great mystical power. It is ruled over by the Amma’ Toa, the Old Father. There is a tremendous mystique around this figure, who is believed to be the reincarnation of all previous Amma’ Toa. Successful candidates to succeed a previous Amma’ Toa are chosen by a long and complicated process. A series of omens (a buffalo, a cock, and incense smoke) must all indicate the same candidate, who must then be able to recite a series of myths and genealogies flawlessly without ever having studied them. To the south of Kajang, the ancient kingdoms of Hero and Lange Lange have been combined into the kecamatan of Herlang. They were in many respects within the sphere of influence of the much larger kingdom of Kajang, and participated in the cult led by the Amma’ Towa (Usop 1985).

To the south of Hero and Lange Lange lay the ancient inland kingdoms of Tiro, Batang, and Bonto Tangnga. These were combined into the kecamatan of Bonto Tiro in the 1960s. They traditionally relied primarily on agriculture, particularly the cultivation of maize. The old kingdom of Tiro was considerably larger than any of its neighbors, and was itself composed of seven parts. Each part was ruled by an official with a different title, in the following rank order: the lompo, “Great One,” of Ere Lebu; the gallarrang, “Titled One,” of Kalumpang; the
Map 1.2 The Ten Realms of the Konjo Makassar
among tau “Mother of the People,” of Caramming; the kapala, “Chief,” of Hila Hila; the macoa, “Elder,” of Basokeng; the karadepa of Salu Salu; and the karabica of Salumunte. Ara borders Kalumpang to the south, and Caramming to the southeast, so Ara’s closest ties to Tiro are with these two settlements.

To the south of Bonto Tiro is the kecamatan of Bonto Bahari, “Land of the Sea.” Because the soil in Bonto Bahari is too thin to support much agriculture, the villages of Bonto Tiro have traditionally provided much of the food eaten in Bonto Bahari in exchange for cash, fish, or trade goods. This agricultural specialization continues even among the migrant work force of Bonto Tiro, who are recruited to work on plantations in Sumatra rather than in boatyards.

Bonto Bahari is composed of the old kingdoms of Ara, Bira, Lemo Lemo, and Tanaberu. Close ties of kinship and economic exchange tied these four ancient realms together. All were largely dependent on the sea for their livelihood: Ara and Lemo Lemo relied almost exclusively on boatbuilding, Bira and Tanaberu on long-distance trade and fishing, with the women of Bira producing high-quality cotton textiles as well.

This division of labor among the four villages is so systematic that the men of Ara deny knowing how to sail, or even to rig, one of the boats they have built. The men of Bira can replace the rudders, masts, and rigging of a ship, but are incapable of building a hull. Because they are sailors, the men of Bira are best known to the outside world and Bira is often identified in the literature as the home of the boatbuilders. In fact, however, the men of Bira proper know nothing of boatbuilding.

Until the 1930s, the men of Ara relied almost exclusively on Bira for orders to build ships. They were paid in cash, to which the Birans had access because of their long-distance trading activities. Their monopoly position placed the Arans at their mercy, and the early part of this century is remembered as a time of hardship in Ara. Ara also engaged in some independent boatbuilding for the ruler of Bone far to the north. But even this did not bring in much cash, because Bone was off the major trade routes by the twentieth century.

The situation was rather different on the other side of the peninsula, in Lemo Lemo. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the boatbuilders of Lemo Lemo took their orders from the Makassar settlements along the south coast of South Sulawesi, as far away as Gowa. In the nineteenth century, this area had far more access to cash than did the Bugis areas around the Gulf of Bone, and as a result the boatbuilders of Lemo Lemo were much wealthier than those of Ara. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are remembered as a sort of Golden Age in Lemo Lemo.

Since the Second World War, the situation has reversed itself dramatically. The men of Ara, who had always held a monopoly of knowledge on building the large cargo-carrying sailing boats called pinisi, have acquired a national reputation and are sent for by entrepreneurs, many of them ethnically Chinese, to build boats of 250 tons and upward everywhere from Irian Jaya to Kalimantan and Sumatra. While the men are away, many for nine months out of every year,
the women have learned to embroider with Singer sewing machines. They now
earn ten times as much sewing as do the women of Bira weaving, while the men
of Ara earn substantially more than the men of Lemo Lemo. The latter settle-
ment is in fact almost deserted now, because it is far from any paved road and
the only fresh water is at the bottom of a cave twenty meters deep. Most of the
former inhabitants have moved up to Tanaberu, and recently the two desas, vil-
lages, have been combined into the Kelurahan of Tana Lemo.

Tanaberu is now the center of government for the entire kecamatan, and
also for whatever boatbuilding still goes on locally. This is because it has the
only broad, flat beach lying near the road, making it the only feasible place to
bring timber in by truck. The boatbuilders of both Ara and Lemo Lemo who do
not wish to go on temporary migration to another province now commute to
Tanaberu or have moved there to work on boats. Very few have established the
contacts or accumulated the capital required to serve as general contractors or
entrepreneurs in their own right and tend to work for natives of Tanaberu as
subcontractors, often for wages rather than a share of the profit. There is some
considerable resentment about this in Ara, because Tanaberu has also received
a good deal of attention in the national and even international media as the
original home of the pinisi builders, which it has never been.

In 1988, the desa of Ara was divided into four dusun, wards. These were
Bontona, Lambua, Pompanru, and Martin. Bontona, the upper settlement, was
the area with the oldest and most noble houses. It was centered around Ere Lohe,
the “Great Spring,” next to which stood the oldest mosque. Lambua was for-
merly Lembanna, the lower settlement. It stretched down the slope to the sea
and was the area where the commoners lived. Martin, at the southern end of the
village, was recently created out of the scattered farming settlements of Maruan-
gin and Tinadung whose populations had moved to the main road. Pompanru,
at the northern end, was also a recent creation. The Great Mosque—Mesjid
Raya—of the village was constructed in the 1960s on the boundary of Pompanru
and Bontona.

The Symbolic Landscape of Ara

Just as the physical landscape is one of the most enduring features of Konjo so-
ciety, so are the rituals that are attached to it. Physical singularities such as
springs, boulders, and large trees tend to be associated with one or more invis-
ible beings. Endicott, in his analysis of Malay magic, argued that the Malays
view the universe as suffused with mystical power, called semangat, which
 tends to be concentrated in discontinuities in the landscape such as large trees,
boulders, caves, and so on (Endicott 1970). Errington, in her analysis of a cog-
nate Bugis term, sumangé, also speaks of an impersonal mana-like force that in-
heres in humans, houses, and other objects (Errington 1983). Though the
people of Ara recognized the term, they did not make much use of it. Their
view of the spirit world involved particularized spirits inhabiting particular
points in the landscape, rather than a diffuse vitality that had to be caught and concentrated.

The chief foci of supernatural power in Ara are large rocks and trees, caves, and the summits of hills (for similar beliefs among the Malays, compare Endicott 1970). Each such feature tends to have a legend attached to it, and many have particular, recognized mediums who specialize in propitiating their spirit inhabitants. It is possible to draw a spiritual map of Ara that shows the location of many kinds of invisible being. Some belong to a category of setan and are propitiated by placing an offering on a sangara, a woven bamboo tray, in their tree or cave. Some are jin—an Arabic-derived term for invisible spirits—who may or may not be practicing Muslims. Some are the spirits of humans who died either in a state of great sin, such as incest, or great sanctity, such as Islamic saints, wali.

Certain places are associated with particular setan, more a kind of nature spirit than truly evil beings. The sort of ritual practices associated with setan are very similar to those I observed during my earlier fieldwork among the Buid of Mindoro and to those described among many other “tribal” Austronesian groups little affected by world religions or ideologies (Gibson 1986). They may be taken as transformations of a very ancient set of practices predating those discussed below. Although the legitimacy of making propitiatory offerings to setan is highly contested now, a century ago it would have constituted a normal method of dealing with certain illnesses.

Ara is composed of three plateaus that ascend from the beach to the central spine of the peninsula it shares with Tanaberu, Lemo Lemo, and Bira. The upper plateau occupies about two-thirds of Ara’s area of approximately thirty square kilometers, but is only very sparsely inhabited. This is partly because there is no source of water on it. All drinking water must be laboriously hauled up from the middle plateau either by women who carry it on their heads or by men who lash great plastic containers to the backs of horses. The soil is also poorest on the highest plateau, and here fertile fields are separated from one another by barren rocky areas roughly ten times as large in area. A certain amount of cattle raising goes on here as well. Once or twice a day the cattle must be driven down to be watered on the middle plateau. From the ridge above Ara, the plateau slopes gently and continuously downward toward Tanaberu in the west. Beyond it lies the Gulf of Bulukumba and the broad plane of Ujung Lohe. Rising majestically over them all is Mount Bawakaraeng, “The King’s Mouth,” the volcanic cone that dominates the south coast of South Sulawesi.

At the north end of the village, the middle plateau rises to meet the upper plateau. At their intersection is a series of caves, boulders, and deep holes called Pilia. These caves were the focus of a cult of the founding royal ancestor, Karaeng Mamampang until the 1930s. Even now, it said that the skull of Karaeng Mamampang and his wife are hidden in these caves. Below the hills of Pilia lie the royal fields of Kaddaro, the produce of which traditionally belonged to the holder of the office of Gallarrang. Kaddaro means “to kick.” According to a story in the Chronicle of Bira, it got this name in the aftermath of
a battle between Tiro and Ara in which so many warriors died one could not cross the field without kicking the heads of the dead.

Below Kaddaro is Gua Passea, a cave that was used in pre-Islamic times as a burial place and in later times as a place of refuge from seafaring marauders. It is regarded by villagers as the premier tourist attraction of Ara, with good reason. It is in the middle of an overgrown area so that a new trail must be cut each time a visitor is taken to it. There is a central vault between ten and twenty meters high, with a hole in the roof through which light shines. The floor is covered with a thick layer of earth, in which many holes have been dug by treasure hunters. All that now remains are two wooden coffins two meters in length. The lids are shaped like peaked roofs. Villagers assert that these are the graves of their pre-Islamic ancestors who stood two meters in height.

Many villagers insist that their ancestors were forced to hide in the caves to escape capture by a race of black cannibals from the east, whom they variously call To Seram, a cover term for Moluccans, To Belo, a tribe from north Halmahera, or To Pua-Pua, “Papuans.” Others argue that the purpose of these raids was not so much cannibalism as the taking of slaves. There is good historical evidence that these raids peaked between 1790 and 1810, when Sultan Nuku of Ternate took advantage of the disorganization of the colonial government that followed France's invasion of the Netherlands. At the back of the cave is a raised chamber known as the tala tala, dais of the kings. It played some role in the installation of the Gallarrang in the past. Local people are convinced that the Dutch also recognized the power, karama, of the place, because every contrdleur came to visit it with his wife soon after his appointment.

At the southern end of the village, the upper plateau falls to meet the middle plateau. At this point, a deep hollow was quarried in the 1930s to supply rocks for the new government road. It is called the hole of Buwi and is said by some to have a resident setan called Topi Merah, “Red Hat.” The Hole of Buwi is just beyond the southern end of the settled part of Ara. To the south of Buwi is a broad, barren area known as Ela, where the most malicious of the setan live. A large ara, or banyan tree, called Talise, that grew in Ela before World War II was the focus of a cult led by a man named Tariasang and his wife Bungko Panasa. Bungko Panasa also served as intermediary for the spirit of Gua Pa’tungia, a cave surrounded by giant pa’tung bamboos. During the 1930s, the village chief, Gama Daeng Samana, singled out this tree and the cult surrounding it during his campaign to rid the village of what he regarded as un-Islamic practices. He personally cut it down to show the villagers that the evil spirits could do no harm to one who placed his trust in Allah. This act made a deep impression on the village, and I was told the story many times.

More generally, every tree is said to have a tutelary spirit referred to as its kammi’na, guardian. This spirit must be propitiated with an offering and invited to move elsewhere before its “house” is felled. There are various methods to determine whether the spirit has accepted the offering and left. One way is to lean your adz against the tree while addressing the spirit. If it falls over, the spirit is
refusing to move. Today, trees are more commonly felled with chain saws. If the saw refuses to start, this is taken as another sign that the spirit is refusing to leave the tree. Another way is to observe the sky above it. If the clouds clear away, it means the spirit has left. Makka Daeng Koda told me a story about a spirit that once left the tree he was about to cut, but decided to move into a fieldhouse nearby. The spirit then had to be coaxed out of the fieldhouse. Otherwise, it would have become uninhabitable by humans.

Certain trees are inhabited by more formidable spirits that cause illness in humans. If such illnesses are diagnosed by a sanro, a traditional healer, an offering must be made at the place where the spirits live. These consist of a complete meal, which means, minimally, cooked rice, boiled eggs as a side dish, and the ingredients of a betel chew—betel leaves, areca nut, lime, tobacco, and gambir powder. These are all placed on a sangara. There is a high point near the coast in Ara, just south of the area called Ela, where the Dutch built a concrete benchmark in the 1930s. This spot was so frequently the site of offerings to setan that it is known as Pasangarang, “Place of the Bamboo Trays.”

In the center of the village territory, the upper plateau drops abruptly to the middle one along a clifflike escarpment. This escarpment runs in a semicircle around the central settlement. There are only a few points at which it is feasible to build a trail down from the upper plateau. The most important of these is right in the center of the central settlement as it is now. A trail runs up from the Great Mosque to the upper plateau and then forks. The north fork takes one to Caramming, and the south fork due west to Tanaberu. The place where the trail climbs up to the plateau is called Bataya, “The Walls,” because many stone walls were built across the trail in the old days to prevent quick entrances into and exits from the settlement by thieves.

At the base of the escarpment is a line of springs. Because of the need for ritual ablutions before entering a mosque, mosques tend to be built next to water sources. In the coastal Konjo area, this usually means that where there is a spring, there is a mosque. There are about five springs along the base of the upper escarpment. Ere Lohe is in the center of the current settlement, just on the border between Dusun Martin and Dusun Bontona. It forms a large pool that is deep enough for children to swim in during the rainy season when the waters rise. Next to it stands the Mosque of Dusun Bontona, the “Upper Settlement.” To the north, in the center of Bontona is Ere Keke, the “Little Spring,” and on the northern border of Bontona, Ere Balu, the “Widow’s Well.” In the nineteenth century, this well was still surrounded by forest. It was here that widows in mourning went to bathe secretly in the dead of night. Deeper in what was then the forest was an area of many small springs known as Ere Karaseya, the “Harsh Springs,” because they were haunted by setan. This whole area is now heavily built up and the Great Mosque stands next to Ere Balu. Finally, a well has now been dug in the center of Dusun Pompanantu, and a new mosque has been built next to it.

The old settlement of Ara was built around Ere Lohe. Just below it is the possi’ tana, “navel of the earth.” There is a navel of the earth in the center of
every village in South Sulawesi, usually under a large rock. Indeed, the notion
that the territory of each local community is centered on a navel of the earth is
common throughout Indonesia (Schulte Nordholt 1980: 239; Traube 1980:
302). It is said that if one lifted the rock and looked down, one would see all the
way to the seventh and lowest underworld. It thus links the Middleworld with
the Lower- and Upperworlds and serves not only as the center of horizontal
space, but also as a vertical *axis mundi*. The *possi’ tana* is now in the charge of a
woman ritual specialist, called Deda Daeng Kati. She was very old and almost
deaf in 1988, but she read lips well and knew Indonesian. (I will discuss the rit-
auls performed on the *possi’ tana* in chapter 8.)

Most of the farmland in Ara runs along a narrow band in the center of the
middle plateau. This band is about three kilometers long and half a kilometer
wide. It thus constitutes only about 5 percent of the surface area of the village as
a whole. At the southern end of it is a spring, Ere Tinadung. There used to be a
separate settlement of farmers here with some sixty households. The people
were intermarried with those of Kasuso, a village of fishermen that is the northern-
nest settlement of Bira. *Kasuso* means “the Corner,” because it is built in a
cove with almost square corners. Kasuso has belonged to Bira for a long time, al-
though there is a legend that originally it belonged to Ara. Many of its customs
are transitional between those of Bira and Ara. For example, half of its inhabi-
tants follow the Ara inheritance rule by which the house passes to the eldest
daughter. Conversely, many of the customs of Tinadung showed influences
from Bira. For example, many men from Tinadung pursued a career as sailors for
part of their lives and were the only ones in Ara to do so. The old settlement of
Tinadung was abandoned to the monkeys in the 1960s, as the government
forced people to resettle closer to the main roads. At the northern end of the fer-
tile strip is the two-hectare field called Kaddaro.

The middle plateau runs right out to the sea at the northern and southern
ends of the *desa*, ending in a series of cliffs falling straight into the sea. In the
center, another escarpment falls abruptly down to the lower plateau that con-
stitutes *Turunan Ara*, Ara’s beach. It is this escarpment that prevents the crafts-
men of Ara from pursuing their traditional occupation of boatbuilding in Ara
anymore. In the old days, there was enough sandalwood growing in the exten-
sive nonarable parts of Ara to supply all the need for raw materials, but this
began to disappear in the 1930s. Now there is only low scrub that barely sup-
plies the needs of the village for firewood. Timber for boats must now be
brought in by truck, and so far there is only a footpath down to the beach. Al-
most all boatbuilding has now moved to the wide beach in Tanaberu that is
easily accessible from the provincial highway.

What is a disadvantage today was an advantage up until about 1920. Be-
fore the Dutch built roads throughout the province, most travel in the area was
by boat and settlements were built near sandy beaches. Maintaining law and
order was also precarious until the 1930s. As late as the 1860s, pirates from Ter-
nate and other Moluccan areas made frequent raids all along this coast. Ara’s es-
carpents made it difficult for raiders to penetrate very far inland, and the population would withdraw to its fort, built near the edge of the middle plateau, or hide in one of the innumerable caves that honeycomb the local landscape.

At the base of the lower escarpment are at least two more springs that provided somewhat brackish drinking water for the old lower settlement of Lembanan. This lower plateau is only about 1.5 kilometers long from north to south, and 500 meters wide. The main spring is at the bottom of the Cave of Pasohara and is occupied by an Islamic jin. This cave ranks as the second tourist attraction of Ara after the cave at Passea.

To illustrate the dangers that derive from the fact that humans share the landscape with a host of invisible creatures, villagers told me about an event that had occurred just two months before my second trip to Ara: In March 1989, a group of boys was playing in the pool of Pasohara, when one of them urinated in the water. When the rest of the boys eventually decided to go home, they realized he wasn’t with them. They went back to look, but could not find him. They hurried back to the village for help, and by the time a search party returned it was already dusk. They gathered dried coconut fronds to use as torches. Just as they were about to light them, they saw the boy hanging from the cliff face, as if his head were caught in a crevice. As they lit the torches, the boy suddenly appeared, sitting on a rock at the bottom of the cliff, unconscious. When he regained consciousness, he said that, just after he had urinated in the cave, a beautiful woman had appeared to him. She took him by the hand and asked him to come with her. He could not free himself until the torches were lit, at which point the spirit exclaimed, “They have come to burn my house down. You had better go away with them.” And so he was released.

According to the villagers, this was not the first time this had happened at Pasohara. A few years before, a bus driver from Bulukumba had gone down to see the cave, defecated there, and been detained by the resident spirit for several hours. The explanation of these events lies in the fact that the cave is inhabited by a jin Islam. These spirits are meticulously clean and will not let such offenses go unpunished. There is another spot inhabited by jin Islam just south of Pasohara near the beach. This is Batu Sibulan, “One-Moon Rock.” Although trees overhang it, one will never find dead leaves on it for it is swept clean by the spirits. This is true also of a boulder atop the caves at Pilia.

At the northern end of the beach is a cave called Kasorang Gama that is inhabited by the spirit of a giant crab (discussed in chapter 5). For about 500 meters north of Kasorang Gama, there is nothing but cliffs, and then Sapo Hatu, or “Stone House,” the rock in which the first king of Tiro, Sampara Daeng Malaja, was buried alive by disgruntled subjects (discussed in chapter 5). This rock marks the northern boundary of Ara. At the south end of the beach is a spring that comes up through the sand called Ere Labba, the “Neutralizing Waters.” Here widows come to wash off the last vestiges of death pollution a year after the funeral of their husbands. Beyond Ere Labba is one kilometer of cliffs that hang over an area of shallow water. Here the Gallarrang used to organize
large groups of villagers to construct bamboo fish traps. It was on one of these traps that Gallarrang Daeng Makkilo died in 1913 from cholera. Beyond these cliffs is another kilometer of cliffs that hang over deep water. At one point, the cove of Bili’, it is possible to bring a large sailing vessel right up to the rocks without touching bottom. The southern border is marked by Soleng point. After that the coast turns inward due west for 800 meters before turning south at a right angle to form the beach of Kasuso, which lies in the desa of Bira.

The people of Ara thus occupy a landscape that is alive with both history and myth, where visible creatures coexist with invisible spirits. They think of this land as a place their ancestors have always lived and as the place where they and their descendents should be born, marry, and die, however much they wander in the intervening years. They take great pride in the preservation of those features of their own dialect, culture, and customary law that distinguish them from the neighboring villages of Tiro, Caramming, Tanaberu, and Bira. But as craftsmen and sailors who make their living from long-distance trade, they also feel quite at home everywhere in Island Southeast Asia. Life on the harsh peninsula of Bira would be almost impossible if the villages of Bonto Bahari were not part of a larger maritime region.